

**Testimony of Cecilia Lewis**  
**Appropriations Committee 02/17/2022**  
**Increase Funding for Independent Living Centers by \$1million**

I have been employed at Independence Northwest, Inc, an Independent Living Center in Naugatuck, CT for over 8 years. At this agency, I am employed as a Housing Coordinator under a contract with the CT Dept of Social Services Money Follows the Person Program, providing housing coordination services for individuals transitioning from nursing facilities. This position involves networking with landlords and property managers to find appropriate accommodation for the people we serve under this program. Without our help, many of the individuals we have met through this program may not have received the services they needed to gain and maintain their independence.

Over the years, CT's five Independent Living Centers have experienced funding cuts or have been flat funded. Each fiscal year, it appeared that were being asked to do more with less for a community that is already disenfranchised. This made it difficult to stretch the dollars to provide services to all the individuals we serve. In past years, we have been forced to trim back on services and instituted wait lists to ensure consumers receive the services they require. Many of the consumers we serve, have struggled to maintain their independence in the community and may not have been successful in maintaining that independence without assistance from the skilled staff at our center. Today, I am writing today in support of increasing funding to the centers by \$1 million.

The work we do is important. We have a positive impact on the lives of those we serve. One particular consumer who transitioned to the community from a nursing home under the Money Follows the Person Program, eventually became a consumer of services at our center and was helped with an application for Energy Assistance, his annual recertification process for housing, setting up his biweekly grocery orders and even met with our Veterans Associate to investigate his eligibility for veterans benefits and even received assistance getting on the Medicare Savings Plan (MSP) Program through our MIPPA Representative. Our services are vital to the disability community, a population often overlooked and underserved. We employ friendly, skilled, knowledgeable staff, who work incredibly hard to deliver services to meet an individual need. Lack of adequate funding at the center has resulted in zero cost of living increases for the staff. Additional funding would permit the centers to continue meeting the needs of those seeking services and to function at optimum levels with staff dedicated to meet those needs.

In closing, I want to thank you for your time, consideration, and support of our request for additional funding. It will help the services provided by the centers make a difference between living in a facility or living at home.

Respectfully Submitted by:  
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Stratford CT  
MFP Housing Coordinator  
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